

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

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TO SECSTATE WASHC 9799
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
AMEMBASSY MANILA
AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE
AMCONSUL MEDAN
AMCONSUL SURABAYA
CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 JAKARTA 8595

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SHUM, ID
SUBJECT: STIRRINGS IN STUDENT CIRCLES

REF: JAKARTA 6262 (DTG 150750Z MAY 78)

1. SUMMARY. AFTER THREE MONTHS OF POST-MPR DORMANCY, THE STUDENT ACTIVIST MOVEMENT HAS BEGUN TO STIR. THERE HAVE BEEN LOW-KEY PROTEST ACTIVITIES AT CAMPUSES IN JAKARTA AND JOGJAKARTA THE PAST TWO WEEKS, AND A DELEGATION OF BANDUNG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS SUCCEEDED IN GAINING AN AUDIENCE WITH PARLIAMENTARY LEADERS, TO AIR MUTED COMPLAINTS ABOUT GOVERNMENT EDUCATIONAL POLICY. THE RECENT RELEASE OF 25 SECOND-LINE DISSIDENT STUDENT LEADERS IN JAKARTA MAY GRADUALLY GIVE ADDITIONAL IMPETUS (AND MUCH-NEEDED LEADERSHIP) TO THE STUDENT MOVEMENT, THOUGH THE TOP-LINE LEADERS ARE STILL SLATED FOR COURT TRIAL. THE RECTOR OF THE UNIVERSITY OF INDONESIA RECENTLY EXPRESSED CONCERN TO THE

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AMBASSADOR ABOUT AN EVENTUAL STRONG RESURGENCE OF STUDENT DISSIDENCE, WHICH MAY BE HARDER TO DEFUSE WITH THE ELIMINATION OF SOME OF THE FACULTY-STUDENT COMMUNICATIONS CHANNELS WHICH HAVE FALLEN VICTIM TO THE GOVERNMENT-ENFORCED "NORMALIZATION" OF CAMPUS. DESPITE A COMMENDABLE DETERMINATION AMONG SOME GOVERNMENT LEADERS TO HOLD GENUINE DIALOGUE WITH STUDENTS, IN AN ATTEMPT TO HEAD OFF THEIR

DISCONTENT, WE AGREE WITH THE RECTOR THAT IT IS MERELY A MATTER OF TIME (PROBABLY MONTHS, NOT YEARS) UNTIL STUDENT DISSIDENT ACTIVITIES AGAIN PLAY AN OPEN AND SIGNIFICANT ROLE ON THE INDONESIAN POLITICAL SCENE. END SUMMARY.

2. THE STUDENT ACTIVIST MOVEMENT-- OFF-BALANCE, WARY AND LARGELY LEADERLESS SINCE THE GOVERNMENT'S PRE-MPR CRACKDOWN ON DISSIDENCE--HAS BEEN VIRTUALLY DORMANT FOR THREE MONTHS. IN THE PAST TWO WEEKS, HOWEVER, THERE HAS BEEN A STIRRING ON CAMPUSES IN SEVERAL AREAS OF INDONESIA, AT A VERY LOW-LEVEL COMPARED TO PRE-MPR DAYS, BUT ENOUGH TO SUGGEST THAT STUDENTS ARE BEGINNING TO PROBE THE GOVERNMENT'S MOOD AND TEST THEIR OWN STRENGTH AND COHESION.

3. THE FIRST OVERT MANIFESTATION OF WHAT STUDENT AND DIPLOMATIC SOURCES DESCRIBE AS A SLOWLY GROWING CAMPUS RESTIVENESS WAS AT JAKARTA'S INDONESIAN CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY (UKI). TWO WEEKS AGO, A LARGE PERCENTAGE OF THE UKI STUDENT BODY JOINED IN A SUDDEN STRIKE TO PROTEST ALLEGED INCOMPETENCE AND CORRUPTION ON THE PART OF THE SCHOOL'S RECTOR AND SENIOR STAFF. THE STUDENTS OF THE PRIVATE UNIVERSITY WERE CAREFUL TO RESTRICT THEIR COMPLAINTS TO INTRAMURAL ISSUES, AND THE GOVERNMENT MADE NO RESPONSE AT ALL TO THE STRIKE (WHICH HAS SINCE BEEN LARGELY RESOLVED THROUGH NEGOTIATION). THE INCIDENT WAS CONFIDENTIAL

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SIGNIFICANT, HOWEVER, AS A FIRST AND BECAUSE NEWSPAPERS, INITIALLY GINGERLY BUT LATER MORE OPENLY, REPORTED FULLY ON THE STRIKE.

4. PAPERS GAVE SIMILARLY FULL TREATMENT TO A MORE PROVOCATIVE MOVE BY STUDENTS FROM 16 OF THE 18 FACULTIES OF JOGJAKARTA'S GADJAH MADE UNIVERSITY (GMU), WHO LAST WEEK ISSUED A STATEMENT CALLING FOR A FREEZE ON FURTHER IMPLEMENTATION AT GMU OF THE GOVERNMENT'S PLAN, ISSUED LATE LAST MONTH AND APPLYING TO ALL UNIVERSITIES, TO "NORMALIZE" CAMPUS LIFE BY DOING AWAY WITH UNIVERSITY STUDENT COUNCILS AND CONFINING POLITICAL ACTIVITY TO OFF-CAMPUS ORGANIZATIONS. THE GMU STUDENTS CLAIMED THAT THEY HAD SET UP THEIR STUDENT COUNCIL AND ONLY THEY COULD DISSOLVE IT. THEY CALLED ON THE GMU RECTOR (WHO, PERHAPS NOT COINCIDENTALLY, FELL ILL AND WENT ON LEAVE SEVERAL DAYS THEREAFTER) TO REFUSE ANY FURTHER ORDERS FROM THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION ON "NORMALIZATION" UNTIL THE STUDENTS WERE CONSULTED. THE GOVERNMENT HAS SO FAR NOT RESPONDED TO THE GMU STUDENT ACTION.

5. MEANWHILE, NOT TO BE OUTDONE BY THEIR COLLEAGUES,

STUDENTS AT BANDUNG ALSO BEGAN TESTING THE ACTIVIST WATERS, BY ORGANIZING A DELEGATION OF 28 TO TRY TO CALL ON PARLIAMENTARY LEADERS LAST WEEK (THEY WERE TURNED AWAY POLITELY) AND THEN PARING THAT DELEGATION TO THREE, ALL FROM HE BANDUNG TECHNICAL INSTITUTE (ITB), WHO SUCCEEDED IN GETTING AN APPOINTMENT WITH THREE PARLIAMENTARY MEMBERS TO AIR SOME COMPLAINTS ABOUT GOVERNMENT EDUCATIONAL POLICY. THEY SPECIFICALLY CLAIMED THAT MINISTER OF EDUCATION DAOED JOESOEF HAD "CONFUSED" THEM, BY INVITING THEIR PARTICIPATION IN THE LEGAL PROCESSES OF GOVERNMENT AND THEN PREEMPTORITY REORGANIZING STUDENT ON-CAMPUS ORGANIZATIONS WITHOUT EVEN CONSULTING THEM. THEY TOLD THE PARLIAMENTARY LEADERS AND LATER THE PRESS THAT THEY CONTINUED TO REGARD THEIR STUDENT COUNCILS AS CONFIDENTIAL

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ACTIVE, MISCHIEVOUSLY SHOWING REPORTERS A LETTER OF "LEGITIMACY" THEY RECEIVED FROM THE PARLIAMENT'S PROTOCOL OFFICE (AGREEING TO THEIR APPOINTMENT REQUEST) ADDRESSED TO "THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE BANDUNG UNIVERSITY STUDENT COUNCILS."

6. AMIDST THESE FIRST STIRRINGS OF PROTEST, THE GOVERNMENT MADE GOOD OVER THE WEEKEND ON A RECENT PLEDGE TO RELEASE MOST OF THE STUDENT DISSIDENT LEADERS STILL DETAINED IN JAKARTA FOR PRE-MPR PROTEST ACTIVITIES. IN A TWO-STAGED RELEASE ON JUNE 24-25, TWENTY-SIX STUDENT

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INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 JAKARTA 8595

LEADERS HELD AT THE SO-CALLED "YELLOW CAMPUS", JAKARTA'S MAIN STUDENT DISSIDENT DETENTION CENTER, WERE RELEASED WITHOUT CONDITION, EXCEPT THAT THEY MUST PERIODICALLY REPORT TO LOCAL SECURITY OFFICIALS. THEY WERE FREED, SAID A GOVERNMENT SPOKESMAN, BECAUSE INVESTIGATION HAD SHOWN THAT THEY DID NOT COMMIT ANY CRIMES. THOSE RELEASED CONSTITUTE THE "SECOND LINE" OF PRE-MPR DISSIDENT STUDENT LEADERSHIP IN JAKARTA. THE MOST PROMINENT LEADERS, FOR EXAMPLE, THE CHAIRMAN OF THE UNIVERSITY OF INDONESIA'S (UI) STUDENT COUNCIL, ARE STILL BEING HELD. (NOTE: AN AUTHORITATIVE GOVERNMENT SOURCE SUBSEQUENTLY TOLD AN OFFICER OF THE DEFENSE ATTACHE'S OFFICE THAT 15 STILL REMAIN AT THE "YELLOW CAMPUS", THOUGH THE PAPERWORK ON ALL OF THEM HAS ALREADY BEEN FORWARDED TO THE ATTORNEY GENERAL'S OFFICE IN PREPARATION FOR TRIAL. ANOTHER 20 -- MUSLIMS AND THOS APPREHENDED FOR THE MARCH 20 FIRE-BOMBING INCIDENTS -- ARE DETAINED ELSEWHERE IN JAKARTA.

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7. COMMENT. THE FACT THAT STUDENT ACTIVISTS APPEAR TO HAVE GOTTEN AWAY WITH THEIR FIRST POST-MPR FORAYS INTO THE PROTEST FIELD WILL UNDOUBTEDLY ENCOURAGE FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES. THE ITB STUDENTS WHO MET WITH THE PARLIAMENTARY LEADERS TOLD THE PRESS THAT A MEETING HAS BEEN IN PROGRESS AT ITB SINCE JUNE 21 TO ASSESS THE SITUATION AND PLAN FUTURE ACTIVITIES. THE RELEASE OF THE JAKARTA 26 WILL ALSO PROBABLY GIVE SOME NEW IMPETUS TO JAKARTA-BASED ACTIVITIES (THOUGH THOSE NEWLY FREED WILL UNDOUBTEDLY BE VERY CIRCUMSPECT IN THEIR ACTIVITIES FOR SOME TIME.) EVEN THOUGH THEY ARE NOT THE TOP-RUNG LEADERSHIP, THEY CAN NEVERTHELESS PRIVATELY GIVE SOME MUCH NEEDED DIRECTION AND COHESION TO WHAT ARE NOW VERY DIVIDED JAKARTA STUDENT CIRCLES.

8. THERE SEEMS TO BE A GROWING FEELING THAT, EVENTUALLY, THE STUDENT DISSIDENT MOVEMENT WILL RE-EMERGE. THE RECTOR OF UI, JUST PRIOR TO THE NEW BUDS OF PROTEST, EXPRESSED TO THE AMBASSADOR HIS BELIEF THAT THE RE-SURFACING OF OVERT DISSIDENCE WAS JUST A MATTER OF TIME. HE WAS PARTICULARLY CONCERNED THAT, THIS TIME AROUND, THE FACULTY AND ADMINISTRATION OF UI MAY BE EVEN LESS ABLE TO COMMUNICATE WITH

AND THUS DEFUSE THE STUDENTS, BECAUSE ONE OF THEIR PRINCIPAL CHANNELS OF COMMUNICATION WITH THE STUDENTS, THE STUDENT COUNCIL, HAS FALLEN VICTIM TO DAOED JOESOEF'S "NORMALIZATION." THE RECTOR FELT THAT THE STUDENTS WILL FIND OTHER MEANS TO COMMUNICATE WITH EACH OTHER, BUT WILL BE EVEN LESS ACCESSIBLE AND RESPONSIVE TO REASON FROM THE FACULTY.

9. THE GOVERNMENT IS APPARENTLY AWARE OF THE POTENTIAL FOR STUDENT TROUBLE AND IS CONSIDERING WAYS OF HEADING IT OFF. FACULTY DEANS OF ALL UNIVERSITIES ARE BEING TASKED, ACCORDING TO COORDINATING MINISTER FOR SOCIAL WELFARE
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GENERAL SURONO, WITH KEEPING A CLOSE EYE ON THE ACTIVITIES OF REMAINING ON-CAMPUS ORGANIZATIONS -- PRINCIPALLY THE FACULTY LEVEL STUDENT SENATES -- TO INSURE THAT THEY DON'T BECOME VEHICLES FOR POLITICAL ACTIVITY. THE GOVERNMENT IS ALSO MAKING A NEW, AND AT LEAST IN SOME QUARTERS APPARENTLY SINCERE, EFFORT TO ENGAGE THE STUDENTS IN SOME KIND OF DIALOGUE, TO HEAD OFF THEIR DISCONTENT AND GIVE THEM SOME CONTROLLABLE CHANNEL TO BLOW OFF STEAM. THE DECISION OF THE PARLIAMENTARY LEADERS TO RECEIVE THE ITB DELEGATION WAS CLEARLY ONE SUCH EFFORT. PARLIAMENT'S NEW CHAIRMAN, GENERAL DARYATMO, HAS PLEDGED BOTH PUBLICLY AND PRIVATELY, TO THE AMBASSADOR, THAT THE DIALOGUE WITH STUDENTS WILL CONTINUE. SURONO, WHO ENJOYS A HIGH REPUTATION IN STUDENT CIRCLES, ALSO RECENTLY STRESSED TO THE AMBASSADOR THE NEED FOR COMMUNICATION WITH THE STUDENTS, AND PLEDGED TO DO WHAT HE COULD TO IMPLEMENT A DIALOGUE (THOUGH NOTING THAT MINISTER OF EDUCATION DAOED JOESOEF WILL HAVE TO TAKE THE LEAD).

10. DESPITE THESE COMMENDABLE SENTIMENTS AND EFFORTS, HOWEVER, WE DOUBT THAT THE STUDENTS CAN BE PERMANENTLY MOLLIFIED OR KEPT IN CHECK.

THEIR DISCONTENT WITH THE GOVERNMENT AND SOME OF ITS POLICIES AND PERSONALITIES IS TOO DEEP-SEATED TO BE HELD PERMANENTLY IN CHECK. ALTHOUGH IT WILL TAKE SOME TIME FOR STUDENTS TO SHAKE OFF THEIR STRONG FEAR OF GOVERNMENT REPRESSION, TO GET THEIR OWN HOUSE IN ORDER (ESPECIALLY IF THEIR TOP LEADERS STAY IN JAIL) AND TO FIND A NEW SET OF EXPLOITABLE ISSUES, IT APPEARS NEARLY CERTAIN THAT SOME MONTHS DOWN THE ROAD THE GOVERNMENT WILL AGAIN HAVE TO DEAL WITH AN EMERGENT DISSIDENT MOVEMENT WHICH WILL NOT BE ORGANIZED, FINESSED OR "NORMALIZED" OUT OF EXISTENCE.
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